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For information

Summary of mid-term reviews and major evaluations of country programmes

Americas and the Caribbean region

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1), which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations, specifying, *inter alia*, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustment in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The mid-term reviews and evaluations described in the present report were conducted during 1998.

Introduction

1. The present report covers the 1998 mid-term reviews (MTRs) of the country programmes for Honduras, Mexico and Peru and the Brazil MTR, which was conducted late in 1997. It also discusses evaluations of programmes for decentralization, community participation and local administration in Peru; child rights in Brazil; and the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (SAFLAC).

Country mid-term reviews

Brazil

2. The 1997 Brazil MTR involved widespread consultation, technical support visits and a joint review between UNICEF and its counterparts, with terms of reference developed by UNICEF and other partners. Evaluations encompassed 45 separate projects and all sub-offices and external evaluators assured objectivity and a participative approach. The country programme management plan was also evaluated and revised in

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terms of programme management, supply and non-supply assistance, personnel, external relations and fund-raising.

3. **The situation of children and women**. Brazil, with a population of 160 million and the world's seventh largest domestic economy, continues to invest large sums in essential social services, child development and women's rights. It is on track to meet the decade goals of the World Summit for Children and the Santiago Accord in the areas of health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation. However, spending levels are not adequate to these tasks; a 1996 budget analysis revealed that only 12.5 per cent of federal social spending benefited the 40 per cent of the population below 18 years of age. State and local social service spending helps to fill some but not all of this gap. The quality of services is another issue; health services reflect poor spending choices and fraud, and universal primary education is near but overall completion rates remain low. Income is unequally distributed, with the richest 20 per cent of the population receiving 67 per cent of all personal income, versus just 2 per cent for the poorest 20 per cent. An estimated 45 million persons live below the poverty line, including 18 million under the age of 18 years, with strong regional disparities. Poverty forces an estimated 9.4 million children to work, including 600,000 children 5-9 years old. Street children are forced to work and are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse. A study in Fortaleza, for example, found that 50 per cent of the street girls engage in sexual commerce

4. **Achievements and constraints**. UNICEF-supported capacity-building and social mobilization efforts sparked public awareness and initiatives on such rights issues as child violence, sexual abuse, social exclusion, maternal mortality, educational quality and child labour. In support of the decentralization of public social services, UNICEF assisted such activities as municipal pacts for children to institutionalize capacity-building, technical assistance and the documentation and dissemination of experience. Diverse partnerships allowed projects to expand and consolidate and many are now fully sustainable. The successes include programmes for community health agents and family health; the child pastorate; support to small entrepreneurs; the rights to education movement; and the Child Rights News Agency. As for constraints, child rights concepts are not fully internalized even by such counterparts as children's rights and guardianship councils, legal organs and key ministries. In addition, decentralization has multiplied the number of projects, sites and counterparts to the point that programme cohesion, monitoring and evaluation and administration were hurt.

5. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR concluded that the country programme had skillfully maintained a mix of partners (from government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), unions, religious groups and the private sector) and promoted their interaction. The country programme was adept at funding strategic or innovative projects that let UNICEF play a "cutting edge" role. Innovation extended beyond programme content to structure and support. Three examples cited were: (a) the creation of new indicators to portray disparities and exclusion; (b) the promotion of networks and mobilization by associating the UNICEF name with an effort without contributing much money; and (c) the mobilization of resources through such new fund-raising strategies as a television marathon that sought pledges while "pro-children" programmes were aired. The MTR also concluded that certain strategies must be modified. More funds are required to increase advocacy networking, capacity-building and social mobilization efforts. Internally, more intersectoral programming is needed to match multisectoral problems and the programme planning roles of the sub-offices vis-à-vis the central office must be re-assessed. The determination of successful impact and coordination of activities among the many offices and counterparts will require improved programme documentation and a fully implemented monitoring and evaluation and research plan.

6. **Country programme management plan**. To promote intersectoral cooperation, six programme areas were combined into three programming units for public policies and rights, specific themes and communication and fund-raising. Changes were also made in the coordination, decision-making and communication processes. The position of sub-offices has been reinforced with respect to programming and management, including fund-raising. To minimize staff costs, 11 posts were abolished and the number of temporary staff is likely to be greatly reduced in 1999.

Peru

7. The MTR process included technical consultations; programme evaluations with counterpart ministries (12 studies were undertaken); and meetings betweeen UNICEF staff, government representatives, adolescents, women's groups, intellectuals and business leaders.

8. **The situation of children and women**. After more than a decade of upheaval, Peru enjoys relative stability. Its economy is among the region's fastest growing and social spending and basic services have improved both in terms of coverage and quality. Never-

theless, striking social, economic, gender and cultural disparities still exist. Since the country programme began, the infant mortality rate (IMR) has decreased to 43 per 1,000 live births, with regional rates varying from 20 to 100. Maternal health indicators have not improved as expected; the maternal mortality rate (MMR) remains very high, at 265 per 100,000 live births and reaching 800 in some regions.

9. **Achievements and constraints**. The country programme's goals, which are identical to those of the 1996-2000 programme for Summit follow-up and the National Plan of Action (NPA), are on target except those for maternal health, universal access to education and child nutrition. The country programme has reached many excluded groups through community participation efforts, special programmes (e.g., birth registration in highland and Amazonian areas) and universal, on-time school enrolment. A national system was developed to monitor the NPA and local plans of action. Special support has been extended to communities that are managing their own basic services such as pharmacies, health centres, development committees, children's defense offices, community kitchens and birthing services. Programmatic constraints include a fragile decentralization process, birth registration fees, family poverty, the social poverty of rural Andean and Amazonian populations and a lack of disaggregated data on excluded social groups. Fiscal constraints include a slight supplemental funding shortfall and major shortfalls for the subregional Amazon programme.

10. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR concluded that the country programme was correct to use its skills and prestige to bring together the Government, NGOs and the private sector. Given the Government's increased allocations to basic services, the country programme was able to complement public policies and place rights on the social agenda. Strategies employed included capacity-building; community participation; and communication and advocacy, specifically for policy modification and institutional and legal conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The MTR concluded that local management and monitoring must be reinforced. The attention to socially excluded groups should be maintained to promote non-discrimination and develop analytic tools to measure inclusion and exclusion. In all cases, but especially concerning marginalized groups, cultural relevance is critical in the design of basic services. In designing service programmes, it was concluded that quality deserved more attention than in the past, when access was the key goal.

11. **Country programme management plan**. The existing programme structure and staffing were found to be well-designed in order to implement the country programme for the remainder of the programme period. No changes are proposed.

Mexico

12. The MTR process, which lasted from March to November 1998, involved the Government, NGOs, children and parents. External consultants undertook a global evaluation, project-by-project evaluations, a study of coordination between donors and an analysis of national transitions affecting children and women.

13. **The situation of children and women**. In general, the basic needs of children under six years of age are increasingly met. IMR fell from 27 per 1,000 live births in 1994 to 25 in 1996. Early results of a decennial survey indicate improvements in the nutritional status of children under five years of age owing to smaller family size, greater urbanization, higher levels of maternal education and greater access to services. Pre-school coverage has risen to 80 per cent for children aged 4-6 years but rates for children up to age three years are stagnant, in spite of non-formal programmes managed by NGOs and mothers. Safe water coverage has increased, especially in rural areas, though universal coverage is not yet within sight. Sanitation shows the same pattern All these changes have occurred against a backdrop of profound political change, regional conflict, financial stress due to falling petroleum prices, continued rural-urban migration and enduring unequal income distribution.

14. **Achievements and constraints**. The MTR recognized the broad achievements of the country programme, including its role in providing strategic support to the Government in meeting the goals of the World Summit for Children, most of which have been or will be reached. There is also progress being made towards the goals that will not be reached, including those for maternal mortality, child malnutrition and safe water. Widespread diffusion of child rights information and mobilization for respect of these rights have been complemented by specific actions to support federal and state programmes to reduce inequality. Children's rights are increasingly respected by the State and society. A milestone achievement was the 1997 "children's elections", which allowed children to express their opinions and also disseminated information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Rights advocates hope that the increased popular concern will help to achieve key legislative changes. UNICEF and its allies are working

for a broad national agreement on children that will unite the public and private responsibilities of government, communities and families. The UNICEF programme works with other donors to multiply resources and impact. Social, political and economic dimensions of inequality must be analyzed more deeply, with quicker action to intercept deteriorating cases or to document experiences that deserve national replication.

15. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR found the country programme's goals of reducing inequality, meeting the goals of the World Summit for Children and supporting implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to be well-chosen and still valid. However, the MTR agreed that it is necessary to define more precisely the objectives of each goal, the relationships between them and how they may be achieved. Evaluations are improving but programme monitoring is basically administrative and there has been little progress in introducing timely corrections during project and programme execution. The MTR also called for a broadening of vision in some areas, especially inequality, which must be considered in all its dimensions. The Summit goals should guide planning with states, municipalities and civil society and the Convention must be the basis for all programming and organized participation. Similarly, as objectives are reformulated, strategies must more consciously converge to support one another. The MTR noted that support for institutional capacity-building should permit a reduced UNICEF presence in the provision of basic services and financial cooperation. A shift is proposed towards technical assistance for rights-based programming. Further, the participation of social groups in programme development and execution should be strengthened. Finally, local fund-raising can both benefit from and contribute towards alliances and should be considered as a valuable programming strategy.

16. **Country programme management plan**. Programmes will focus collectively on four broad approaches to realize the reformulated goals: (a) reinforcement of rights; (b) realization of the decade's goals; (c) increased emphasis on public policy reform; and (d) convergence of programmes in priority states. Capacity-building and social mobilization strategies will be more prominent. The executive committee overseeing the country programme will be strengthened and its members jointly charged with planning, monitoring and evaluating projects. Two specific tasks are to make programme objectives more coherent and improve coordination with counterparts and other United Nations agencies. A review will be undertaken to judge whether expected funds will require changes in the staffing structure.

Honduras

17. The MTR exercise, which took place from February to September 1998, was guided by an interinstitutional evaluation team. Participants from the Government, civil society and UNICEF took part in an updating of the situation analysis, a programme review and a three-day MTR meeting. The MTR took place prior to the devastating hurricane that affected much of Central America and the Caribbean in October-November 1998, with Honduras especially hard hit. The situation of children and women was dramatically affected by this tragedy, and the Acting Regional Director will provide updated information to the Executive Board at the first regular session in January 1999.

18. **The situation of children and women**. Despite an improving economy, foreign debt remains a burden and two thirds of the population live in poverty. Income disparities are great, with the wealthiest 10 per cent of the population receiving on average 30 times more than the poorest 10 per cent. Regional trends towards peace have allowed Hondurans to consolidate their democracy, increase civil participation and modernize the State. Owing to immunization and other efforts, IMR declined from 52 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 42 per 1,000 live births in 1997. The decade goal for reducing IMR is within reach, but improvements in the use rate for oral rehydration therapy are are not being maintained and there is little progress in reducing malnutrition and promoting breastfeeding. Pre-school education coverage remains low at 37 per cent (1997) and primary school enrolment reached 87 per cent in 1996, although problems concerning quality persist. Coverage for potable water increased to 78 per cent (1996) but universal coverage will not be achieved by 2000. The MMR is the fourth highest in Latin America and Honduras has over half of Central America's confirmed HIV/AIDS cases. Clear gender discrimination still confronts women in terms of labour, basic services, income and higher education.

19. **Achievements and constraints**. Child survival programmes include support to health decentralization, immunization, growth monitoring and the integrated management of childhood illnesses. Access in target regions has increased by 20 per cent, with gains seen in management, quality and equity. Constraints include lower-level administrative weakness and rapid staff turnover. The private sector has become involved in food fortification but the impact and sustainability have yet to be evaluated. The water and environmental sanitation programme successfully introduced low-cost, small diameter sewers. In education, the pilot non-formal, pre-

school education centres have laid the foundations for expansion of service and quality. Likewise, model community child-care homes are increasingly being adopted by the Government, NGOs and private enterprise.

20. Administrative restructuring impeded some efforts, but an alliance of authorities and grass-root religious groups were successful in promoting citizen education for peace in democracy, human rights and participation in local development. Effective use of the media has increased the acceptance of child rights ethics, which in turn has eased programme implementation. Mayors are renewing the "Pact for Children", i.e., committing their localities to goals for children by directing more local resources to them. The country programme has helped to develop key new state institutions including the Institute for Children and the Family and an Office of the State Attorney for Children and the Handicapped. Successes have also been recorded through emergent civil organizations receiving UNICEF support, notably regional coordinating bodies. After an intense advocacy campaign, a Law for Prevention and Condemnation of Domestic Violence Against Women was passed in 1997. Youth mobilization efforts were less successful because of lack of government support and weak institutional capacity, as well as the damage caused by the suppression of youth activities in the past decade.

21. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR agreed that UNICEF had a comparative advantage and should reinforce municipal capacities in participatory planning, resource mobilization and communication. This would permit further decentralization of the country programme, including annual planning with regional health and education directorates and rights commissioners. Decentralization, however, will require increased geographic convergence, especially in service programming. The MTR also found that some central-level strategies required reinforcement. Stronger efforts will be required to meet the goals of the World Summit for Children and the NPA. Legislative and institutional reform to harmonize laws with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women must be pursued more vigorously. Institutionally, the MTR called for a new governmental body to develop violence prevention programmes and to implement the National Plan for Youth, and endorsed immediate support for the agenda of the recently created Institute for Women. The MTR also found that monitoring and evaluation activities must be strengthened.

22. **Country programme management plan**. Like all other country programmes, the UNICEF office in Honduras is refining its programme and project objectives. The programme structure and staffing arrangements of the office are considered effective and will be maintained without change.

Major country programme evaluations

23. Three recommendations made in 1997 to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation culture in the region were realized in 1998: (a) an electronic monitoring and evaluation network was established, with 70 members; (b) an occasional newsletter, "Lessons Learned and Best Practices" was launched; and (c) a working paper series was begun and has issued four reports. Priority themes for 1998-1999 will be strengthening monitoring and evaluation as part of the MTR process; monitoring progress towards the decade goals; and reinforcing the process for creating integrated monitoring and evaluation plans.

24. The three evaluations described below offer different insights into child rights programming. The Brazilian example concerns a child rights programme that funds over 180 projects and looks at the impact of specific initiatives, programme management and the wisdom of placing child rights in a separate programme as opposed to making it a common focus in every programme. The evaluation of SAFLAC examines whether a loosely coordinated multi-country programme can respond flexibly to protect children, change policies and improve national capacities amid deteriorating economies and structural adjustment programmes. The Peruvian case study evaluates whether joint programming between local government and communities can arrive at culturally relevant and cost-effective solutions to a limited number of basic service shortfalls. All three examine which roles UNICEF can perform best, including the evolving role of bridge between partners who otherwise might not be able to establish effective contact.

Evaluation of the child rights programme – Brazil

25. In 1997, the child rights programme comprised 186 projects spending $7 million annually. Its objectives are the promotion and defense of children's and adolescents' rights, access to services for children and families at risk and preventive activities. Its many partners base their specific activities on a child rights perspective. An external consultant assessed the programme's relevance, effectiveness and results in terms of capacity-building.

The methods used were reviews of records, interviews and evaluation of 16 projects selected for their uniqueness, innovation, scaling-up potential and manifest or potential intersectoral integration.

26. The evaluation found that the campaigns against violence against children, sexual abuse and child labour have yielded innovative public initiatives and helped to mobilize resources. UNICEF was helpful in the capacity-building and social mobilization components. Even without major investments, because of its credibility, UNICEF promotes alliances and programmatic collaboration among the Government, NGOs and communities. Technical assistance provided by UNICEF was key in several cases, including an information system for policy analysis and violations of children's rights, and developing the institutional capacity of children's rights and guardianship councils. A lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation has constrained programme development. The evaluation also found that the "rights guarantee system" is improving but continues to have huge gaps. It is an effort to supply the services and opportunities promised in Brazil's progressive legislation guaranteeing children's and adolescents' rights. In addition to resource limitations, social, regional, racial and sexual prejudices create problems, including the widespread belief that children do not have independent rights.

27. The lessons learned from the experience show that a child rights perspective has greater potential to achieve more success than the programmes previously directed at "children in especially difficult circumstances". The Children's Statute is far from accepted, even by such partners as children's rights and guardianship councils, the judiciary and special protection organizations. The association of UNICEF with child rights can yield programme economies; by using the UNICEF name wisely to assist allies' networking, fund-raising or advocacy can have powerful results without major spending. In effect, the prestige of UNICEF is a resource that can be as powerful as fiscal or technical support.

28. Promoting interinstitutional forums requires much effort at articulation and breaking down institutional barriers but has long-term benefits for programme convergence, mutual trust and coordinated action. The Children's Rights Councils particularly would benefit from membership on municipal councils designed to coordinate the action of service providers in the areas of health, education or women's services. The qualitative leap in the campaigns against sexual exploitation and abuse and child labour came from unifying formerly vertical components that had separately addressed physical integrity, health, education and leisure. Approaching issues from the point of view of the whole child is an absolute necessity for success.

29. The evaluation recommended as follow-up that as part of the post-MTR programme restructuring (described in para. 6 above), the child rights programme be placed in a newly created public policies and rights priority programme. Based on new intersectoral and rights criteria, priority themes for 1998 are child labour; the right to education of vulnerable children; sexual abuse and exploitation; nutrition; quality of life; and environmental citizenship (eradicating child labour in urban waste deposits).

Evaluation of the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean, preliminary results - The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office

30. SAFLAC assists Latin American and Caribbean countries coping with social deterioration following economic crisis and structural adjustment. It fosters policies combining adjustment with growth recovery and protection and it supports innovative cost-effective social programmes. SAFLAC allocates between $3 million and $6 million each biennium for 20-50 projects. Five types of projects are supported: (a) social policy design/implementation; (b) service decentralization and NPAs for Children; (c) child rights advocacy/mobilization; (d) national and local capacity-building; and (e) information systems for monitoring the situation of children. Examples of projects are an infant and maternal health programme in Bolivia, a social development plan in Guatemala, an anti-poverty programme in Costa Rica and a child law project in Venezuela.

31. Two external evaluators reviewed documentation, interviewed UNICEF staff and counterparts and visited six countries with a representative array of projects. The evaluation examined whether large-scale objectives were met, the impact on the profile of UNICEF in beneficiary countries and the management structures of the regional and country offices. Lessons learned may lead to changes and will help UNICEF globally to determine if such funds merit replication. The evaluation is important for child rights issues from the perspective of public policy, capacity-building, the development of monitoring and evaluation, communication, mobilization and internal UNICEF oversight.

32. According to the evaluations's preliminary findings, new institutional cooperation was fostered

between UNICEF and host countries. SAFLAC turned the priorities of UNICEF country offices towards innovation and public policy. SAFLAC became part of the emergent child rights approach in UNICEF cooperation, helping the region to move away from traditional assistance. In creating forums and relationships between UNICEF and social policy definers, UNICEF gained increased access and important advocacy avenues. Projects are characterized by increased popular participation in design and execution. Sustainability appears unusually high for innovative projects. Decentralization showed mixed results; subnational levels are grappling with their new responsibilities and most local plans of action did not get far. Skilled social mobilization and communication efforts resulted in approval of laws and codes benefiting children. SAFLAC was a particularly important support for developing information systems that track (often new) social indicators. SAFLAC did not help to mobilize donor funds, contrary to UNICEF expectations. The regional office's management of the whole process was questioned in terms of evaluating projects and disseminating findings.

33. A number of lessons were learned during the exercise. The growth of UNICEF as a partner in social and rights policy-making might have happened without SAFLAC, but it is believed by many participants that SAFLAC funds nourished the process. The benefits came not from the size of the material or financial contributions, but from the strategic way in which they were used. Respondents repeatedly complimented SAFLAC projects for their precise focus, flexibility, diversity and innovation and for moving quickly to seize opportunities. SAFLAC appeared to reach one limit, however. It did not affect economic policies as it affected social policies. Influencing economic policy may require other strategies and perhaps additional advocacy targets. It also became clear that a regional fund requires more active management at the regional level. The country offices' observations on coherence, evaluation, and dissemination require adjustments.

Decentralization, community participation and local administration - Peru

34. This programme supports making public policies more inclusive, participatory and culturally relevant. Working with historically excluded regions and social groups, projects reduce inequality by raising local awareness and service demand and involving communities in implementation and self-monitoring. Three projects were evaluated: (a) local administration committees, which are negotiation and coordination forums uniting local residents, municipalities and public and private service providers such as NGOs; (b) the initiative to universalize on-time school enrolment, which mobilizes communities to identify school-age children who are not attending school, devise and implement enrollment strategies and monitor and react to their attendance and integration; and (c) local committees for shared health administration, which provide community health services and oversee budgets and services to increase quality and efficiency. The evaluation focused on the quality of local administration, the vitality of civic participation and the social inclusiveness that was achieved. External evaluators interviewed officials, users, parents and community members, made local visits and reviewed health and education surveys and administrative records.

35. The evaluation found that public policy is better articulated when government and civil society work together. UNICEF is effective as a bridge connecting diverse actors, maintaining a focus on child rights and stimulating demand. The participation of civil society in social monitoring increases the demand for service and for accountability. Co-managed services showed greater use by the population, increased productivity and greater efficiency and equity. Owing to the initiative to universalize on-time school enrolment, 70,000 children, especially girls, have started their education. The participatory research-action methodology used to locate unschooled children and understand the reasons for their non-attendance was critical, as was stressing education as a right to be respected by parents and the community once services are present.

36. The evaluation concluded that the programme is fundamentally sound and no significant changes are anticipated. The programme's expansion and replication will be proposed, particularly through governmental and other donor financing.

Conclusion

37. The MTRs and evaluations demonstrate live processes around country programming at the field level. These exercises exhibit reflection and refinements in terms of content, processes and structure of both programme approaches and offices. UNICEF offices in the region and their counterparts are permanently looking at how rights can be more fully realized and they are using these exercises to meet the goals of the World Summit for Children.

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Summary

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Introduction

1. Five countries in the East Asia and Pacific region reached the mid-point of their country programme cycles in 1998. Four of the mid-term reviews (MTRs) are covered in the present report. Due to the uncertain political situation in Cambodia, the review for that country programme has been delayed until November 1998; therefore, it will be included in next year's report. In view of the number of MTRs in the region and the size and significance of the programmes involved, this report is devoted entirely to these reviews. Next year's report will give greater emphasis to a discussion of evaluation activities in the region.

2. A great deal of effort went into the 1998 round of MTRs at both country and regional levels. The five programmes reviewed are the region's largest, giving special visibility and significance to these exercises. Moreover, the MTR itself has taken on greater importance within the overall context of management excel

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lence, accountability and effectiveness. Concurrent reviews of the five largest country programmes was seen very much as a pioneering effort for the region, providing examples and setting precedents for future years. For these reasons, the MTRs were given very high priority.

3. Another factor contributing to the "special" nature of 1998 is that it was a year of extraordinary economic and political turmoil, the impact of which has been apparent throughout the region, but is particularly marked in several MTR countries. Indonesia has been the hardest hit of all the countries by the economic crisis that struck in mid-1997, threatening progress built up over several decades and toppling the 32-year regime of President Suharto. In Cambodia, the inability to form a stable Government following parliamentary elections in July continues to obstruct even routine developmental work. Despite a reconfiguration of its military Government and its admission as a full member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the political situation in Myanmar has resulted in a continuation of sanctions and a general lack of donor support. In addition to the effects of the economic crisis, which have been less serious than elsewhere but are none the less a cause for concern, China experienced enormous damage from floods in the second half of 1998. Viet Nam has probably been the least subjected to severe shocks during 1998, although the effects of the economic crisis have begun to be felt, and its ultimate impact is still unclear.

4. The UNICEF Regional Management Team (RMT) saw important opportunities, both before and during the review process, for sharing experience, expertise and best practices. Regular RMT meetings have been a forum for substantive discussion, feedback and coordination. The regional office played a major role in the process. Regional advisers visited every MTR country at least once and participated actively and intensively in the design and implementation of studies, evaluations and other related activities. UNICEF representatives and staff from other countries participated in some of the MTRs.

5. The evaluative content of 1998 MTRs was exceptionally high. In all countries undertaking MTRs, significant evaluations were undertaken specifically to enhance the review process, and the MTRs were themselves major evaluative undertakings. In every country, extensive, systematic analysis of progress and constraints in programme implementation, based on field monitoring data and programme documentation supplemented by special studies, was an integral component of the review process.

Country mid-term reviews

China

6. Nearly two thirds of the region's children live in China. Thus, the success or failure of its efforts to promote child rights and welfare have very important implications for the region as a whole. China's commitment to its children is strong, and it has been a leader in many areas such as education and mortality reduction. However, the ongoing socio-economic transition and Government reorganization pose significant challenges in maintaining this leadership role, sustaining past achievements and successfully addressing newly emerging problems and issues.

7. The MTR meeting was the culmination of an extensive review of the China country programme for 1996-2000. The review process was highly participatory and collaborative. Project and programme reviews took a frank and objective approach to issues and emphasized cross-sectoral linkages to strengthen their contribution to the overall country programme and national goals for children. Sectoral field assessments were a particularly useful part of the exercise, providing opportunities to observe the actual availability of expected inputs or services on the ground and to assess their effectiveness. A cross-sectoral team was fielded to examine the risks faced by children and women from the poorest and most isolated families and communities. This provided a deeper understanding of the special challenges to achieving the goals of the National Programme of Action (NPA) in the most deprived areas and among families most in need. The results of this exercise were used particularly to draw strategic conclusions and formulate guidelines for local plans of action for achieving the NPA goals.

8. **The situation of children and women**. Progress in reducing infant and child mortality has been steady, and China appears to be on track for reaching the child survival goals. The decline in the under-five mortality rate since 1990 means that 400,000 fewer young children died in 1997 than at the beginning of the decade. No new cases of polio have been detected in the last two years. Child malnutrition has also shown a steady decline, with underweight levels in 1995 about 20 per cent lower than in 1990. Great strides have been made in the consumption of iodized salt, now available in more than 80 per cent of all households as compared with 51 per cent in 1995. Government water programmes for water-scarce areas have reached 30 million of the 80 million people living in these areas. Net enrolment at the primary level is reported at roughly 99 per cent for both boys and girls. National efforts are under way to better fulfil the provi-

sions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

9. There is, however, a tendency towards wide disparities between urban and rural areas and among provinces and regions. For example, a 1995 multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) found that only 7 per cent of rural households had sanitary latrines as compared with 74 per cent in urban areas. The percentage of underweight children is nearly four times as high in rural areas as in urban areas, and under-five mortality varies among provinces from a low of 9 deaths per 1,000 live births to a high of 73 deaths. Emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS, education for the children of migrant or "floating" population groups, kidnapping and exploitation of children, and domestic violence are matters of growing concern.

10. **Achievements and constraints**. The ongoing programme of cooperation fits well with the Government's overall policies for social development, and the MTR concluded that, for the most part, planned objectives and targets are being achieved. In the area of child survival, UNICEF provision of supplementary vaccines for subnational immunization days has played a crucial role in China's progress towards polio eradication. In UNICEF-assisted water and environmental sanitation projects, 1.4 million persons have benefited from handpump systems, 24,000 families have been reached with direct support for sanitary latrines, while an additional 190,000 families have been motivated to install latrines using their own resources. A health financing project is developing and testing a variety of health insurance schemes to improve access of rural families to preventive and curative health care.

11. A primary education project is promoting innovations to bring children into school in 102 of China's least developed counties. It has helped to raise girls' enrolment rates above 95 per cent in over one half of these counties and to increase from 30 to 53 the number of counties where the enrolment gender gap is less than 1 per cent. Collaboration with other United Nations organizations has been particularly effective in maternal and child health (MCH), immunization, primary education, prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and iodine deficiency disorders, and the strengthening of poverty alleviation efforts for women.

12. Among the constraints to efficient and effective programme implementation is the pronounced verticality in the structure and management of many projects which limits their ability to mobilize multisectoral responses in areas such as malnutrition and hygiene and sanitation, and hinders the coordination of communication and family education initiatives. There is serious concern that the share of public funding for social sector programmes, particularly health, is stagnant or actually declining. This is affecting access to and utilization of basic services, especially those oriented towards prevention. Official encouragement of financial self-sufficiency by health institutions, for example, has led to a greater focus on curative medicine. The lack of good quality and up-to-date data, disaggregated by sex, location and other relevant variables, is another constraint to effective planning and targeting in many sectors.

13. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. Initiatives for NPA decentralization have resulted in the establishment of programmes of action for children in all provinces and in more than 80 per cent of China's 2,000 counties. Capacity-building for local planning in poor areas is being expanded rapidly by the national Government. Health sector experience has demonstrated, however, that the devolution of responsibility to local governments, communities and mass organizations needs to be balanced by central policy coordination to assure adequate funding and consistent back-up support, especially in the poorest areas.

14. The rapidly changing situation in China has required previous strategy adjustments, beginning in 1996 with consultations on emerging perspectives on child rights. Other adjustments since then have focused on unreached children, stronger programme linkages with the Government's poverty reduction initiatives and emerging issues such as child trafficking and HIV/AIDS. Such expansion in areas covered in the cooperation requires strengthening of the advocacy role of UNICEF and the engagement of new partnerships.

15. During the MTR, the Government indicated that reaching the NPA goals for sanitation and malnutrition reduction should be given enhanced national attention; and in the poorer counties, the elimination of neonatal tetanus and maternal mortality reduction should also be emphasized. In line with government poverty alleviation policies, it was agreed that more attention should be focused on disadvantaged and minority areas, with an emphasis on advocacy and capacity-building to address more effectively the social dimensions of poverty. Initiatives to improve coordinated planning and convergent delivery of services to the poor counties will be tested during the second half of the cooperation. It was also agreed that more attention should be given to emerging issues and problems of children, ensuring their continued access to basic services and protecting their

rights in a rapidly changing social and economic environment. These emerging issues include urban poverty, the girl child, child trafficking and HIV/AIDS. Efforts in resource mobilization for children should also be strengthened.

Indonesia

16. Indonesia is suffering from the current economic crisis more than any other country in the region. Whereas per capita income grew by 6 per cent or more throughout the first half of the present decade, forecasts for 1998 indicate a decline in gross domestic product of 13 per cent or more. Unemployment now stands at about 15 per cent of the economically active population, affecting 15 million to 20 million people.

17. The extensive review process included provincial reviews in each of the seven provinces selected for special programme focus and separate sectoral reviews for the 14 subcomponents that comprise the country programme. The National Planning Board took responsibility for overall coordination of the exercise, which involved all partner ministries and implementing agencies at subnational levels. Major donors, United Nations agencies and selected non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were also consulted. The review methodology included a retrospective analysis of the country programme to date as well as the formulation of proposals for significant realignment during the 1999-2000 period in response to the ongoing crisis. Consultation and review of programme documentation and field data were supplemented by evaluations in three areas of particular importance to the cross-sectoral, decentralized thrust of the country programme strategy (safe motherhood, strengthening of local planning and demand creation for universal consumption of iodized salt).

18. **The situation of children and women**. The impact of the economic crisis on poor families across the country is threatening many of the gains achieved over the past several decades. An ongoing, longitudinal "100 village survey" has been modified to obtain specific information on the impact of the crisis. An analysis of this data is expected to be available before the end of the year. Partial and scattered data from other sources are very disturbing. Hospital records in East Java reveal a sharp rise in severe malnutrition among young children. Data from four provinces showed a 25 per cent increase in childhood anaemia and a doubling of diarrhoea incidence among both women and children. The Government estimates that as many as 6 per cent of primary students and 13 per cent of junior secondary students (a total of about 8 million children) may be forced to drop out of school. This compares with about 2.8 million drop-outs in a normal year.

19. **Achievements and constraints**. During the first half of the programme cycle, nearly universal access to iodized salt was achieved, and over 23 million children under five years old were reached in each of three successive rounds of national immunization weeks aimed at the eradication of polio. UNICEF field offices in five provinces provide a presence at the field level that has facilitated leveraging of government resources for social sector programmes and the strengthening of local government capacity to respond rapidly and effectively to needs brought about by the ongoing crisis.

20. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The programme structure outlined in the master plan of operations (MPO) consisted of three main components — service delivery, advocacy and social mobilization, and capacity-building — and 14 supporting subcomponents. The main components were expected to be mutually supportive and reinforcing and to focus respectively on "What", "Why" and "How" issues to be addressed by the overall programme. However, experience in the first half of the programme cycle showed that the intended integration and mutual support functions of this design were difficult to achieve. One major constraint was the mismatch between the structure of the programme and that of the Government bureaucracy. Each operational subcomponent tended to establish its own set of counterparts at national and subnational levels, with separate and sometimes inconsistent objectives, and, in many instances, focusing on different geographical areas. In addition, although the programme design was logical and even elegant in concept, it became quite complex in practice, and planning, coordination and monitoring accordingly grew in complexity as well. These factors were taken into account at the MTR when it was agreed that the country programme would undergo a major realignment to more effectively respond to the drastically changed economic environment. Consequently, a revised and somewhat simplified programme structure was also recommended and agreed to during the MTR.

21. The proposed realignment of the country programme is based on the original goals, objectives and principles outlined in the MPO. Pursuit of the major end-decade goals and adherence to the principles of decentralization, resource leveraging and community empowerment will be retained, but with a sharper focus on a limited set of key strategies and programming areas.

22. The new crisis response programme will present opportunities to achieve a sharper focus on critical priority areas. It consists of four major programme areas (community self-help for MCH; integrated efforts in diarrhoeal disease control and water and sanitation; revitalization of the network of integrated service posts (*posyandu*) as an outreach vehicle for all health and nutrition interventions; and support for basic education to maintain enrolment levels and prevent drop out). The basic education component represents a re-entry by UNICEF into this sector. Education was not included in the original country programme plan in view of Indonesia's strong performance in that field. However, the prospect of large numbers of children not enrolling or dropping out of primary school as a result of the crisis was thought to justify renewed UNICEF assistance. Supporting activities will be clustered in the areas of integrated local management and planning to strengthen crisis response, integration of communication messages and channels, and more focused monitoring, evaluation and information management. Four activities from the current programme are regarded as essential for the achievement of major goals and commitments, and will be continued: food fortification/salt iodization; universal child immunization (UCI); support for institution-building for child protection; and programme development for early child care and development (ECCD).

Myanmar

23. Myanmar is on track to meet several of the NPA targets and MPO objectives such as child immunization and polio eradication. However, there has been retrogression in education and an inadequate response to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS. Following Myanmar's first country report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Government has allowed some discussion on the recommendations of the Committee and has agreed in principle to review the Child Law to strengthen compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, progress is slow.

24. The MTR process was designed to strengthen participation and ownership of its findings. The Government, other United Nations agencies and NGOs worked with UNICEF through programme review groups to examine each programme. A total of 16 studies and evaluations were carried out to provide a firm foundation for programme assessment. A broad group, including the Government, bilateral donors, UNICEF Executive Board and ASEAN members, United Nations agencies and NGOs, participated in the MTR meeting.

25. **The situation of children and women.** Children in Myanmar still face many challenges. Although child mortality is thought to have declined in recent years, more than 100,000 children still die before the age of five years. Major causes are low birth weight, neonatal problems, pneumonia, diarrhoea and malaria, compounded by the effects of malnutrition. For maternal mortality, all available estimates show a wide range of variation, but it is known to be among the highest in the region, ranging from 100 to 580 per 100,000 live births depending on the different sources of reference. Poor sanitation, unsafe water and inadequate hygiene practices are major contributors to morbidity, and malarial outbreaks also constitute serious health risks for children and pregnant women. In recent years, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has reached alarming levels.

26. MICS data show a decline in net primary school enrolment from 85 per cent in 1995 to 83 per cent in 1997, and in the completion rate from 34 to 27 per cent. This is the lowest completion rate in the region, and one of the lowest in the world — a particularly worrisome situation in a country that had made remarkable progress in basic education and literacy in the early decades after independence. Child labour, sexual trafficking and children in conflict with the law are particular concerns in the area of child protection. Very little hard data exist, but indications are that measures for the prevention and protection of these children are insufficient. For most indicators of children's and women's welfare, urban-rural disparities are considerable. The 75 per cent of the population residing in rural areas, especially those living in the peripheral border townships, often lack access to basic services.

27. **Achievements and constraints**. During the first two years of the programme, UNICEF Yangon was able to mobilize $9 million in supplementary funding from 17 different donors, representing 38 per cent of the five-year ceiling. However, the funding environment remains highly constrained. To counter the recent sharp decline in supplementary resources, UNICEF Yangon is developing a comprehensive fund-raising strategy and searching for more effective ways to work with NGOs.

28. In several areas, achievements have exceeded expectations. In three years, National Immunization Days (NIDs) have reached nearly 5.5 million young children. No cases of wild polio virus infection have been reported since 1996. Supplementation to eliminate vitamin A deficiency has also made considerable progress, rising from only 6 per cent of children under two years old in 1995 to 61 per cent in 1997. Salt iodization has progressed rapidly. In 1997, 66 per cent of households

consumed iodized salt, up from 14 per cent in 1995. Over the past four years, the Continuous Assessment and Progression System (CAPS) and All Children in School (ACIS) projects have increased net enrolment from 44 to 61 per cent and completion rates in project schools from 65 to 75 per cent. In total, these projects reach more than 15,000 rural primary schools, or nearly one half of the total number, and serve about 1.8 million children.

29. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. In the remainder of the programme period, priority will be given to the elimination of neonatal tetanus, universal salt iodization (USI), implementation of the Integrated Management of Maternal and Childhood Illness (IMMCI) initiative, ECCD, strengthening the vital registration system and promoting life skills through the educational system.

30. Intensive advocacy has been an effective tool to mobilize political support for high-impact activities such as NIDs, USI and National Sanitation Week. Capacity-building strategies targeting government counterparts, NGOs and communities have also been effective in improving the quality of services provided to children and women, and in fostering progress towards implementation of the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Implementation of two rounds of MICS in 1995 and 1997 has strengthened capacity to carry out data collection exercises and utilize their findings.

31. Opportunities for closer cooperation with local NGOs and religious groups are being examined, especially those working in border areas and in activities for children in need of special protection. The benefits of cross-border collaboration have been clearly demonstrated in the joint planning and implementation of NIDs and acute flaccid paralysis surveillance between Myanmar and China's Yunnan province. Further opportunities for cross-border collaboration might be identified.

32. The current programme has worked effectively to achieve most MPO objectives, and there is no need for major structural change. However, the CAPS and ACIS projects will be merged in the second half of the cycle to facilitate "expansion through integration". The IMMCI strategy will be implemented through a new project created by merging the control of diarrhoeal diseases/acute respiratory infections (ARI) and community health management and financing projects. These changes should reduce duplication and increase cost-effectiveness. Core programme activities, including UCI and NIDs, HIV/AIDS prevention, vitamin A supplementation, review of the Child Law, Sanitation for All, CAPS/ACIS integration and traditional water source upgrading will continue to be supported in full. UNICEF participation in United Nations Inter-agency Thematic Working Groups, such as the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, will also be continued.

33. **Country programme management plan (CPMP)**. An internal Resource Management Working Group undertook a thorough assessment of a wide range of management issues covering supply, administration, information technology, finance and personnel. A full CPMP will be undertaken in 2000. Recommendations from the April 1996 internal audit are being implemented, and systems have been established to improve resource management efficiency.

Viet Nam

34. The overall environment in Viet Nam is very supportive of all matters related to children, and the country continues to attract substantial donor support. The Consultative Group on Viet Nam, for example, has committed over $6 billion in official development assistance (ODA) during the last three years. A study of domestic and ODA allocations for basic social services was prepared as part of the Government's response to the Oslo "20/20" conference of 1996, and in late 1998, Viet Nam hosted a follow-up conference in Hanoi. Viet Nam was designated as a pilot country for the preparation of a United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). That document, completed in April 1998, now forms the basis for all United Nations reform initiatives in the country.

35. A programme audit in September 1997 started the MTR process by identifying 10 issues requiring follow-up and special attention. Planning and strategy development with the Ministry of Planning and Investment followed shortly thereafter, initiating a process of continuous dialogue between UNICEF staff and their government counterparts. Findings and recommendations from the 27 evaluations and studies carried out since the start of the country programme helped to identify critical issues and unfinished business.

36. In the spirit of UNDAF, the formal MTR meeting was opened by the United Nations Resident Coordinator, and was attended by principal government counterparts, United Nations agencies, NGOs, donor and Executive Board embassy representatives, the World Bank and UNICEF staff from New York headquarters and the regional office.

37. **The situation of children and women**. The transition to a market economy has brought benefits to many Vietnamese, but it has also brought new problems. The removal or reduction of government subsidies for social services and the introduction of user fees have had the most serious impact on the poor, especially ethnic minorities, and urban-rural and lowland-highland inequities have been exacerbated.

38. The rapidly growing number of children involved in drugs, trafficking, violence, abuse and prostitution is a matter of serious concern. However, the scale of these problems and the complex dynamics that shape them are not well understood, and current efforts to deal with them are of limited effectiveness. Considerable resources are being mobilized to control the spread of HIV/AIDS, but the incidence of the disease is increasing rapidly in some urban centres, particularly Ho Chi Minh City.

39. The incidence of perinatal mortality, ARI and diarrhoeal diseases remains high, slowing progress in reducing infant and under-five mortality. More than 40 per cent of the under-five population is under weight; but efforts aimed at eliminating vitamin A and iodine deficiency disorders have been very effective. Forty-four of the 61 provinces have adequate access to iodized salt. Less than 50 per cent of the rural population have access to clean water; however, an even smaller proportion use sanitary means of excreta disposal. Some 40 per cent of children aged three to five years are attending kindergarten, and over 90 per cent of primary school-age children are enrolled in school. However, access to education, health care and adequate nutritional intake are often lowest for women and girls, and in minority ethnic communities.

40. **Achievements and constraints**. The goals for immunization and oral rehydration therapy utilization have been met, and polio eradication, neonatal tetanus elimination and measles control are close to fulfilment. Remaining problems include high levels of maternal mortality and the very limited access to services and care for disadvantaged segments of society. Little progress has been made in solving the chronic problem of child malnutrition.

41. Over 26,000 new water points were constructed during the first years of the country programme, and over 1,200 school latrines have been installed. UNICEF-assisted education projects have provided early learning for 47,000 children under three years old and over 85,000 five-year-olds. Almost 130,000 students are now enrolled in multigrade and bilingual schools, and alternative basic education has been provided to 115,000 disadvantaged children. However, the MTR concluded that project inputs have been spread too thinly over too large an area.

42. The review found that household income has increased and the status of women has improved through activities for income generation, *Facts for Life* communication and post-literacy training. Advocacy on behalf of children in need of special protection measures has helped to sensitize both the Government and the public and to give child protection a more prominent place on the political agenda. Recent Government directives on street children and child labour are indicative of progress in this direction. The mass media now openly report on several previously sensitive issues related to children in need of special protection. A life skills approach is being used to introduce HIV/AIDS into the education system.

43. The ethnic minority development project acts as a catalyst to attract government and donor funding to help reduce the disadvantages faced by ethnic minorities. The project has created models of integrated services that are now being adopted by other cooperating partners.

44. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR process identified a wide range of lessons in each programme area, some of which apply across multiple sectors. Several sector reviews identified the need for more precise geographic and social targeting. Experience in focusing on ethnic minorities has shown that achieving the main human objectives of a project or programme may require some tailoring of standard input packages to take into account special factors such as language, cultural practices and limited media access. The availability, timeliness, quality and appropriateness of programme-related data is another issue common to many programme areas. Country programme management has been strengthened through the establishment of annual tri-partite reviews involving the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the respective sectors and UNICEF.

45. Child protection is to be mainstreamed throughout the country programme in order to raise awareness and stimulate action on child labour, disability and sexual exploitation. MCH and primary health care activities will be integrated in pilot districts to strengthen the district health system and improve the delivery of MCH services. Community-based monitoring will also be introduced in these areas. The area-focused approach is to be reoriented to improve convergence of project inputs in 125 of the country's 598 districts, and a system of close monitoring and observation will be introduced in a small number of the selected districts. Efforts to control young

child malnutrition will be concentrated in 500 of the poorest communes. An integrated monitoring and evaluation plan, based on clear and measurable objectives, will be developed to provide better guidance for monitoring and progress assessment at programme, sectoral and projects levels.

46. A demand-based approach will be applied for water and sanitation in better-off areas where programme inputs will be limited to seed funds, design assistance and loans recoverable through consumption fees. Installation costs will be borne by users. In early childhood care for growth and development, an integrated strategy will be developed to help families and communities meet the physical, psychosocial and emotional needs of children through better overall care. In child protection, the programme will focus on families, particularly those in high-risk and vulnerable areas, and on addressing the root causes of child exploitation. The ethnic minority development project will be expanded to include the Central Highlands, and the HIV/AIDS project will be extended to include Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

47. **CPMP**. An internal review of UNICEF staffing concluded that if UNICEF is to be able to provide technical support, acknowledged to be the most critical requirement for development in Viet Nam, appropriately qualified staff need to be recruited and retained. The review also recognized a need to improve cost-effectiveness and efficiency, and to make better use of junior professional officers and United Nations volunteer positions.

48. A careful review of the role of Ho Chi Minh City sub-office concluded that the sub-office should be retained. Its structure and specific responsibilities should be reformulated to strengthen its capacity in the area of child protection, which is rapidly assuming increased importance in the southern part of the country. In the spirit of UNDAF, the sub-office already shares common premises and other support services with other United Nations agencies.